

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 021463

P R 110726Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6923

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 0739

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR JO XF

SUBJECT: NEXT STEPS--ANOTHER VIEW

REF: AMMAN 0499 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: JORDANIAN GENEVA CONFERENCE CHIEF AND PM'S UNCLE ABDUL MUNIEM RIFAI (WHO JUST RETURNED FROM VISITS WITH SADAT AND ASAD) BELIEVES ADAD WANTS TO AVOID WAR AND TO FIND A JUSTIFICATION FOR GOING TO GENEVA. RIFAI SUGGESTS THAT US AND JORDAN PUSH TO LINK RENEWAL OF SYRIA UNDOF MANDATE TO RENEWAL OF GENEVA CONFERENCE, ON A DATE CERTAIN, TO OPEN WAY FOR SYRIA TO ATTEND GENEVA. HE BELIEVES (CONTRARY TO WHAT PM RIFAI HAS TOLD ME) SYRIA WOULD NOT PUSH FOR PLO PRESENCE THERE AT OUTSET. HE THINKS JORDAN WILL GO TO GENEVA, BUT DELAY ACCEPTANCE TO AVOID PLO CRITICISM. HE BELIEVES PLO CRITICAL OF JORDAN POSTPONING ELECTIONS ESSENTIALLY BECAUSE OF WEST BANK SUPPORT BEING GENERATED FOR HUSSEIN. HE INDICATED JORDAN NEEDS GREATER BALANCE TOWARDS EGYPT IN ITS RELATIONS WITH EGYPT AND SYRIA BUT IS RESISTING EGYPTIAN PRESSURES TO MAKE JORDAN A "CLIENT STATE." WE FIND ELDER RIFAI'S VIEWS EXPERT AND STIMULATING BUT BELIEVE HE MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN WE ARE ABOUT SYRIAN FLEXIBILITY AND OUR ABILITY TO INFLUENCE SYRIAN ATTITUDES ON GENEVA. END SUMMARY.

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2. ON FEB 10 I HAD A TALK WITH ABDUL MUNIEM RIFAI, PRIME MINISTER'S UNCLE, KING'S EMISSARY AND SOMETIME CONFIDANT. RIFAI HAS JUST VISITED CAIRO, DAMASCUS AND MOSCOW (WITHIN LAST SIX WEEKS) ON SPECIAL MISSIONS FOR THE KING AND HIS VIEWS PROBABLY OUGHT TO BE GIVEN SOME ADDITIONAL WEIGHT FOR THAT REASON.

3. RIFAI REVIEWED FOR ME IN DETAIL HIS CONVERSATION WITH SADAT AND PRESENT STATE OF PLAY IN JORDAN-EGYPTIAN TIF. HE ADDED LITTLE NEW EXCEPT TO SAY THAT EGYPT SEEMS TO BE MAKING SOME CONCILIATORY MOVES AND THAT JORDAN AMBASSADOR IN CAIRO IS BACK TO SEE KING AND PRIME MINISTER.

4. HE USED HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN EGYPT TO LEAD INTO A SUGGESTION WHICH HE SAID WE HOPED WE WOULD CONSIDER POSITIVELY. HE BELIEVES SADAT IS BADLY ISOLATED AND DOES WANT A GENEVA CONFERENCE. FURTHER, HE SAID THAT ASAD DOES NOT WANT WAR AND IS SERIOUS ABOUT NEEDING A JUSTIFICATION FOR GOING TO GENEVA. WITH SUCH A JUSTIFICATION HE WILL GO. RIFAI THEN CONTINUED THAT IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT SYRIA WOULD LIKE TO RENEW THE UNDOF MANDATE AND THAT TOGETHER WE (US AND JORDAN) SHOULD CONSIDER LINKING THE MANDATE AND THE RENEWAL OF GENEVA SO THAT THE "SUBSTANCE" OF GOING TO GENEVA ON A DATE CERTAIN, UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS (MENTIONED NEXT PARAS) WOULD PERMIT SYRIA TO ATTEND.

5. THE FORMULA ABDUL MUNIEM RIFAI OUTLINED IS INTERESTING. HE INSISTS THAT SYRIA WILL GO TO GENEVA AND WILL NOT INSIST ON THE PLO BEING PRESENT FROM THE START (CONTRARY TO THE VIEWS OF HIS NEPHEW THE PRIME MINISTER). HE PROPOSES THAT SYRIA BE PUSHED TO ACCEPT A MANDATE RENEWAL WITH A RESOLUTION THAT FIXES A TIME FOR GENEVA ON A DATE CERTAIN. HE ADDED DATE NEED NOT BE RIGHT AWAY, BUT WITHIN A PERIOD OF SOME MONTHS. CONCURRENTLY, THERE WOULD BE AGREEMENT ON A TEXT OF A FOLLOW-UP LETTER FROM THE TWO CO-CHAIRMEN INVITING THE PARTIES TO ATTEND. THE LETTER WOULD SET AS AN EARLY ITEM FOR DISCUSSION, OR PERHAPS AS THE
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FIRST ITEM, THE DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE. THIS WOULD, HO NOTED, BE FULLY IN ACCORD WITH THE ORIGINAL INVITATIONS. IF WE COULD BE MORE SPECIFIC ABOUT ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS, I.E., "PALESTINIANS, LEBANON" SO MUCH THE BETTER--IT WOULD HELP WITH SYRIA.

6. I ASKED HIM IF HE REALLY BELIEVED SYRIA WOULD ACCEPT THIS

APPROACH AND ATTEND. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT WITH A PUSH FROM THE U.S. AND STRONG PRESSURE FROM THE KING, ASAD WOULD DO IT. I SAID THAT I HAD DISCUSSED SUCH AN APPROACH (IN GENERAL TERMS ONLY), IN THE FORM OF A QUESTION, WITH PRIME MINISTER AND HE SAID SYRIA WOULD CONTINUE TO INSIST ON THE PLO BEING INVITED FROM THE OUTSET. RIFAI REPLIED ALONG THE LINES OF "THAT BOY" (I.E., PM RIFAI), HE'S ALWAYS TOO NEGATIVE, BUT PARTICULARLY ON IDEAS WHICH ARE NOT HIS OWN."

7. I ASKED RIFAI IF HE WAS AWARE THAT EVEN IF THE ISRAELIS COULD BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT A LETTER OF

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INVITATION TO GENEVA IN THAT FORM, THEY MIGHT WELL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSION AND IN ANY EVENT IT DID NOT SEEM TO ME IT COULD BE A DISCUSSION WITH ANY POSITIVE CONCLUSION FOR SYRIA. HE SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS STILL WORTH TRYING. SYRIA NEEDED SOME JUSTIFICATION FOR A FORWARD MOVE AND THEIR THRESHOLD WAS NOT AS HIGH AS SOME THOUGHT.

8. HE THEN DISCUSSED SOME OTHER AREA DEVELOPMENTS. HE THOUGHT JORDAN SHOULD AND WOULD GO TO GENEVA, BUT WOULD HOLD OUT UNTIL THE END PUBLICLY TO AVOID CRITICISM THAT IT WAS OVERTURNING THE RABAT DECISIONS. HE SAID THAT EGYPT MISGUIDEDLY WAS NOW STIRRING UP PLO CRITICISMS OF JORDAN ON THE ELECTION POSTPONEMENT

ISSUE. THIS WAS A WAY TO GET AT SYRIA. THE CRITICISM TOOK THE FORM OF HITTING AT JORDAN DIRECTLY, AND SYRIA INDIRECTLY FOR SUPPORT BY JORDAN, IN AN ALLEGED MOVE TO RETURN TO NEGOTIATIONS. HERE ISRAEL AND EGYPT AND THE PLO WERE ALL BEATING THE SAME DRUM. THE IRONY OF IT ALL, HE SAID, WAS THAT SADAT HAD MADE THE SAME PITCH TO HIM--"COME BACK INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS AND GO WITH US TO GENEVA. RABAT WAS A SERIOUS MISTAKE."

9. RIFAI SAID THE SOVIETS WANT JORDAN TO GO TO GENEVA AND WILL NOT INSIST ON THE PLO BEING THERE
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FROM THE OUTSET.

10. HE NOTED THAT THE PLO IS BIEEER ABOUT AND CRITICAL OF HUSSEIN ON THE ELECTION ISSUE BECAUSE OF THE WIDE APPARENT SUPPORT FOR HUSSEIN THAT HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED ON THE WEST BANK, AND NOT BECAUSE HUSSEIN IS POSTPONING ELECTIONS. THE PLO DOES NOT WANT TO FORCE ELECTIONS ON THE EAST BANK, BECAUSE MANY PALESTINIANS, THE PLO IS AFRAID, WOULD FEEL CONSTRAINED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION AS "JORDANIANS" IF THE ISSUE CAME TO A HEAD NOW. OR AT LEAST THEY WOULD BE FACED WITH A VERY AGONIZING CHOICE.

11. RIFAI ALSO SAID THAT IF THE PROPOSAL HE MAKES FOR A SOLUTION WORKS OUT, IT WILL HELP BOTH SYRIA AND EGYPT, FOR BOTH CAN CLAIM THAT ITS OWN PARTICIPATION WAS REQUIRED TO BRING ABOUT THE CONFERENCE. HE ADDED THAT SYRIA WILL ALSO WANT SOME ASSURANCE THAT GENEVA WILL CONSIDER THE WHOLE PROBLEM, NOT JUST DISENGAGEMENT STEPS. HE NOTED THAT JORDAN COULD NEVER, NEVER GO TO GENEVA WITH EGYPT ALONE ON THE ARAB SIDE. IT COULD ONLY GO WITH BOTH SYRIAN AND EGYPT. BUT HE DID STATE THAT JORDAN SHOULD MOVE FURTHER TO BALANCE RELATIONS WITH EGYPT AND THAT KING WAS READY, AT TIME OF HIS OWN SELECTION, TO VISIT EGYPT AND THAT STEP APPEARED TO BE SOMETHING SADAT WANTED. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM ME, HE SAID THAT SYRIA HAD NEVER TO HIS KNOWLEDGE PUT PRESSURE ON JORDAN NOT TO GO TO EGYPT OR TALK WITH THE EGYPTIANS. WHAT SADAT WANTED (A SORT OF EXCLUSIVE CLIENT STATE IN JORDAN) WAS NOT POSSIBLE, BUT MUCH GREATER BALANCE WAS ACHIEVABLE. SADAT ALSO WANTED THE KING TO "EXPLAIN" HIS US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT STATEMENT ON SINAI II. KING HAD DONE SO AND HAD REPLIED TO SADAT'S CRITICAL LETTER FORCEFULLY, BUT IN A MEASURED TONE, TO PROTECT HIMSELF. THE JORDANIAN JUDGMENT IS THAT SADAT MADE IT CLEAR HE WANTS TO PUSH OR SHOVE JORDAN AWAY FROM SYRIA AND CLOSER TO

HIMSELF AND JORDANIANS FEEL ON THAT BASIS THEY SHOULD
BE PREPARED TO DEFEND PAST ACTION IN THE FACE OF
EGYPTIAN THREATS OF EXPOSURE.

12. RIFAI CONFIRMS THE EGYPTIANS WILL APPOINT A NEW
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AMBASSADOR HERE, NOT THE MAN THE KING REFUSES TO
PROVIDE AGREEMENT FOR.

13. RIFAI ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT US VIEWS HAD RECENTLY
BECOME MORE POSITIVE ON GENEVA. I TOLD HIM THAT WAS
TRUE. HE ASKED ME FOR NO COMMITMENT ON HIS IDEA AND I
GAVE HIM NONE.

14. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE RIFAI MAY BE A LITTLE
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT WHAT SYRIA WOULD OR COULD BE PUSHED
TO SETTLE FOR. HOWEVER, THE IDEA IS INTERESTING.
WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR REACTION TO IT FROM DAMASCUS.
PICKERING

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, FOREIGN RELATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976AMMAN00739
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760051-0595
From: AMMAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760261/aaaacbqh.tel
Line Count: 247
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 AMMAN 499
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <31 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEXT STEPS--ANOTHER VIEW
TAGS: PFOR, JO, XF
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006